

Bus Buzz

November 2007

Steering Committee Meeting

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A special steering committee meeting was held from September 17 through September 20 to help SDE student transportation staff address several pressing issues. I would like to express my appreciation to the members for their concern and dedication to Idaho's student transportation needs by taking time from their busy schedules to participate in this unscheduled meeting at the very beginning of a new school year. As everyone knows the cost of school buses increased significantly last year, and many buses were purchased at costs greater than the maximum allowable reimbursable costs as set forth in SISBO. It appears as though the costs will remain as high or could increase more this year, and SDE does not have the authority to reimburse districts for those added costs. Cost increases ranged everywhere from a few thousand to as much as \$15,000 more than maxi-

mum allowable amounts. Reasons reported to SDE for the increases included everything from new emission standards to higher production and materials costs, but we saw little consistency in the amount of increases. In an effort to ensure this does not happen again, we have undertaken the task of building both a conventional and a transit-style basic bus, asking the dealers to bid them on a semi-annual basis and adopting the lowest bid price as our maximum allowable reimbursement price. This would allow the maximum allowable price more flexibility in what appears to be a more volatile market without escalating the cost of buses. We intend to have the process completed and the first bids from the dealers by January 15, 2008 and will keep everyone updated on our progress. We are well into the process of developing a new depreciation schedule that will allow us to reimburse

the purchase of a new bus using our current 12-year schedule or an alternative schedule based on mileage and road conditions. This will require several changes in Idaho Code as well as State Board of Education Rule, which will not allow the implementation before 2008 or 2009. We intend to have a model on our Web site by the first of the year. In an effort to treat all districts more fairly in regards to routing software, we invited six software companies to demonstrate their products to the committee. They were all allowed sufficient time to show us why their programs are the best for Idaho school districts and how competitive their pricing is. Our intention is to review at least six additional software companies programs and then compile a list of approved software programs. If the program is approved, a district would then review and pick a minimum of three

(cont. pg. 2)

Student Performance Field Trips

There are two classifications of performance field trips: Students participating in a performance and students attending a performance. Both types of performance field trips must meet the criteria questions contained in the

Field Trip Mileage Tracking Determination chart for reimbursement. Reimbursable student performances must be within the community, which is within district boundaries. Students attending performances is not limited to within

the community. We encourage school districts to use the Field Trip Mileage Tracking Determination chart to aid in classifying field trips as reimbursable or non-reimbursable.

—Lanette Daw

Steering Committee Meeting (from pg.1)

programs from the approved list that fits its needs, ask for bids from the vendors and then follow the normal pre-approval process for reimbursement for its chosen program. Once again, we will keep everyone informed as the process continues. We also had a lengthy discussion on whether or not districts should be allowed to use an audible signal instead of a hand signal to notify students when it is safe to cross the road when loading or unloading from a school bus. Discussion focused on safety and liability concerns on both forms of signaling the student. A visible signal is the statewide standard and the information that

students have learned since at least 1980, which includes most of the drivers now driving Idaho roads. Some districts are concerned with drivers misinterpreting a hand signal from the driver to the student as a signal for them to proceed instead of the student. The question is if the stop sign is out, why would a bus driver signal a driver to proceed through it? That would mean a ticket for the bus driver. Officials at school districts using an audible signal have observed that students have a tendency to just listen for the signal and to no longer look at the driver or actually look both ways before crossing the road. What

happens when other noise levels are so high students cannot hear the signal from the driver, but think they did and just go? What do you do when you have a hearing-impaired student trying to cross the road? When using an audible signal to cross, what do you use for an emergency signal to stop or do not cross the road? The final consensus was that all reference to crossing the road in all current Idaho manuals and curriculum require a visible hand signal from the driver to the student, and this is the way it should be enforced by SDE staff performing reviews and spot inspections.

—Ray Merical

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Region 1 Supervisor's Meeting

Region 1 Supervisors Meeting, was held October 9, 2007, at the Coeur d'Alene School district. I would like to thank Jill Hill for hosting the meeting in her district.

Bidding for Bus Products or Services

Bidding requirements is a common question from school districts. For example, do districts have to bid fuel? We have not been able to receive an official interpretation of statute; however, it is SDE School Transportation's current opinion that bidding is required for

any annual purchase over \$25,000, per Idaho Code 67-2806. Districts should go through the bidding process for fuel, contracted repairs, and contracted services, to name a few. Bidding helps ensure responsible use of taxpayer dollars.

—LD



Steering Committee Member, Cliff Mooney, from region one (St. Maries), covered the following topics but not limited to: the basic bus, routing software, lifetime sports, and max. depreciation. Lifetime sports sparked quite a bit of conversation (see this page for more information).

Lifetime Sports

The most recent Office of Performance Evaluations audit on SDE School Transportation reported that SDE needed more oversight in rising transportation costs. This led to SDE doing more frequent and in-depth district audits. Since that time,

SDE has been re-searching state content and standards to clarify lifetime sports reimbursement criteria. This has evolved into a more clear definition. It is not a change in rule, but clarification to help correct inaccurate interpretations and classifi-

cations of lifetime sport mileage.

Reimbursable lifetime sports are those applicable to a "lifetime sport" class. The state content and standards guides only reference lifelong (cont. pg. 3)

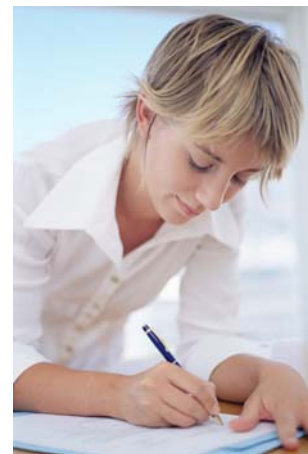
Non-conforming vehicles, Non reim. options on buses, held our interest for a while then moving onto ISDE documents, which was welcome information. Ridership for the week of 15th thru 19th was met with mixed emotions. The group talked about, School bus safety week Oct 22-26 with Oct 24th proclaimed as School personnel appreciation day. Please let the state know if you are having activities for staff. The next regional meeting will be held after the November/December steering committee meeting. —VO

Pre-Approval Requirements

SDE has developed a new form for submitting pre-approval requests. Districts that would like consideration to purchase items that require pre-approval should use the request form available online. Requests are typically required for large-purchase items. The form needs to be submitted in advance. A sample of items that require pre-approval are bus routing software,

annual routing software fees, bus leasing, equipment rental, out-of-state conferences beyond STN, regional professional development training fees, replacement two-way radio systems, and tools not on the tool reimbursement list or more than \$150. Bus options that require pre-approval include, but are not limited to, diesel auxiliary heater, air conditioning, automatic chains,

and transmission or driveline retarders. Non-reimbursable options specifically outlined in SISBO are white roofs, tinted windows, fire-block seating material, and air conditioning without IEP requirement. Districts that would like to purchase the non-reimbursable bus items outlined in SISBO should spec them as separate options in their bus specifications. —LD



Train the Trainer Workshops

During August, Train the Trainer workshops on School Bus Emergency Evacuations were held in Regions I, IV, V, and VI for trainers and drivers. SDE staff and State Trainers trained approximately 200 district trainers and drivers on proper methods of evacuating a school bus in an emergency. Training topics included proper types of equipment, storage and use of emergency equipment, providing emergency evacuation training in accordance with NHTSA's Guide-

line 17, proper documentation of all evacuation drills, instruction of students transported on field trips, activities and charter buses, and Blind Mans Bluff, which is an actual demonstration on how to safely evacuate a burning bus using either a smoke machine or by blind-folding the driver.

SDE staff and State Trainers will continue to offer School Bus Watch and Operation Lifesaver trainings during the upcoming school year. If your district has any

training needs you would like assistance with or specific topics you would like to see at a Train the Trainer workshop, please contact your regional Transportation Specialist, State Trainer or Steering Committee Representative. Tentative dates for the 2008 Train the Trainer workshop will be during the week of August 11 with the only location likely to be at BSU in Boise.

—Doug Scott

SDE Staff and State Trainers trained approximately 200 district trainers and driver.

Lifetime Sports (from pg.2)

sports at the high school level. There is no reference to lifelong sports at the elementary or middle school level; therefore, mileage for a lifetime sport activity as part of an elementary or middle school physical

education class is non-reimbursable.

SDE has discovered that lifetime sports have been interpreted otherwise for many years. We are continually striving to provide more clear information and create

equity among all districts. Additional changes may be anticipated in an effort to clarify and do more in-depth audits.

—Lanette Daw



Non-conforming District/Personal Vehicles

How is your district tracking expenditures in district-owned non-conforming vehicles? Effective July 1, 2007, beginning with claims filed for 2007-2008, all expenses to maintain and operate the shop truck, district van, shuttle cars, etc. should be tracked in a 683 General Transportation expenditure account and will not be reported on the transportation reimbursement claim form. District-owned non-conforming vehicle mileage that is eligible for reimbursement will no longer be reported on Line 40 of the claim, but will be reported as a separate line item that is reimbursed at the State Board of Examiners rate, currently 48.5 cents per mile. The district shall maintain accurate mileage records of all trips in all district-owned shop trucks and supervisor/trainer cars used in support of yellow school buses. Examples of reimbursable support

mileage are: Shuttle drivers to/from remotely parked buses, repair school buses, deliver parts, check road/route/bus stop conditions, and travel to SDE-sponsored conference/meetings. Examples of non-reimbursable support mileage are: To/from work, personal errands or use, transporting students, and transporting non-transportation district personnel. There are a variety of scenarios and case-by-case district uses for shuttle cars. For example, some districts begin bus routes at the bus driver's home and use a shuttle car mid-day, eliminating one round trip of bus miles each day. Districts should evaluate and select the best fit when deciding whether to use a bus or shuttle car, evaluating both time and mileage. Non-conforming vehicle mileage should be tracked separately to identify reimbursable and non-reimbursable sup-

port mileage. Mileage for home-to-work-to-home and mileage in vans and other non-conforming vehicles used to transport students is non-reimbursable.

Payment for mileage in personal employee vehicles in-lieu of putting miles on the school bus is only reimbursable when it is more cost effective than the regular route would otherwise be. Eligible employee reimbursements for personal mileage will continue to be reported on the claim form as a direct expenditure amount for the reimbursement the employee received, not through the district-owned, non-conforming support mileage reimbursement rate. When an employee is paid personal mileage as a benefit rather than a reimbursement for busing, it is non-reimbursable and should be taxed as part of the employee's income.

—LD

Districts should evaluate and select the best fit when deciding whether to use a bus or shuttle car.

2007 Spot Inspection of the Year

West Bonner County School District Transportation Supervisor Joe Kaveshan was presented with the 2007 Spot Inspection of the Year Award while attending the annual school bus technician's workshops held at BSU last July.



State Trainer Workshop

State driver trainers and SDE staff spent two days in July attending Q'Straint's "Take a Minute for Safety Program" that was presented at the Kuna school transportation facility. Through the efforts of Mr. John Goss of Q'Straint, who brought Idaho the Q'Straint Special Needs Driver and

Attendant of the Year awards, we were the first state to be offered the program without traveling to their Florida facility. The new training program and instruction kit were developed to assist trainers, drivers and aides in the proper use of wheel chair and occupant securement systems. Even though the

course centers on Q'Straint's own securement systems, it covers most of the systems used in today's transportation of special needs students. If your district is interested in the training program, contact your regional SDE transportation specialist for further information.

—Virginia Overland

Technician's Workshops

The 2007 Idaho School Bus Technician's Workshops were held July 17 – 19 in Boise at Boise State University's Applied Technology Facility. Attendance was good and we are fairly certain that everyone in attendance came away with information that will assist them in their daily duties. We had a few minor problems with parking and classrooms but overall the BSU facilities seemed to work very well with our program needs. Our plan is to stay with BSU and build a working relationship with them that will allow our program to improve every year. We have already begun working on next year's program and the tentative dates for the workshop are July 14 – 18, 2008.

We tried to make it easier for everyone to attend the entire program this year by starting on Tuesday and ending on Thursday so participants could use Monday and Friday for travel days. We received positive feedback for arranging it this way but we still had far too many attendees leaving after the Thursday morning classes. It's not fair to ask an instructor to take time out of their busy schedule to come all the way to Idaho to teach a when no one shows up for it. We do not want to tie reimbursement for the workshop to classes attended, but we might need

to resort to this option to be fair to those footing the costs. We also moved our picnic to Wednesday evening and invited all of the instructors so the attendees would have an added opportunity to visit with them in a more relaxed one-on-one setting. It gave everyone more time to enjoy their meal, converse with their friends and peers and took less time away from the classes. The food was great, and no one seemed to go away hungry. Brad and Hank got to prove that they could cook almost as well as Ray and Doug. If things get rough it looks like they might even be able to find work flipping burgers almost anywhere. We still believe that in the most part it is good for the technicians to be able to meet with vendors and find out what the latest and greatest is and how they might be able to cut their districts costs. Even though they may not be doing the actual purchasing of parts, it is beneficial for the technicians to be able to discuss parts with their supervisors with a better understanding of what is available. We will be looking for a way to incorporate the vendor show back into the workshops without taking away from valuable class time. We might need to schedule this on Thursday afternoon.

Instead of going to lunch on

Wednesday, a few of us met with Jeff Lyon, who is the corporate service director for Lake City International in Salt Lake City, and Tom Garrison from IC. The topic of concern was the service and warranty work provided by Lake City International to their customers. Mr. Lyons made a commitment to work with his dealerships and the school districts to resolve these issues. It may be a bit early to hear of any changes or improvements but we would like to hear from any of those involved so we can keep abreast of the situation.

If you have any thoughts or suggestions you would like to make regarding the technicians workshops please contact me at west-val@filertel.com or (208) 543-4566. We are striving to develop workshops that technicians want to attend, but we need your input to do so. We have to know what you need before we can try to provide it. Companies are already developing their class schedules for the coming year and we do not want to be told we are too late in asking them for assistance. Comments concerning these years' workshops were very positive and we would like to see that continue.

—Doug Scott

***Tentative
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Recall Notice

Thomas recall 07V-135 involves certain Thomas Minotour Buses manufactured between January 6, 2006 and September 6, 2006. The defect involves the inboard rollstop inter-

lock. If you have question or concerns contact your Thomas dealer. Thomas recall 07V-250 involves certain Thomas Saf-T-Liners C2 buses manufactured between December 1, 2003

and October 10, 2006. The default involves the fuel fill tube mounting bracket. If you have question or concerns contact your Thomas dealer.

—Brad Jensen



Funding Cap Waiver Process

The past Legislative session resulted in a change to the funding cap waiver process and criteria for granting waivers. Prior extended-year waivers are no longer in effect. Beginning with the FY2007 Transportation Reimbursement Claims, waivers may be granted over the 103% cap based on the percentage of a district's hardship bus runs. To qualify as a hardship bus run, the bus run must display uniquely geographic circumstances and meet at least two of the following criteria:

Number of student riders per mile is less than 50% of the state-

wide average number of student riders per mile.

Less than a majority of the miles on the bus run are by paved surface, concrete or asphalt, road.

Over 10% of the miles driven on the bus run are a 5% slope or greater.

If a district meets the above criteria, a waiver for the hardship bus runs may be granted. For example, if a district or charter school has 10 routes and is granted a waiver for one hardship route, they would be allowed a 113% cap instead of a 103% cap for that year's re-

imbursement.

SDE is revising the Funding Cap Appeal Application and the Funding Cap Model to reflect regulatory changes. A preliminary Funding Cap Model will be available in January. Districts that are capped may submit a Funding Cap Appeal Application to SDE for routes that may qualify as hardship routes. The appeal application is due February 1, 2008. After review of the applications, SDE will visit districts to evaluate possible hardship routes and work with districts to submit appeals to the State Board of Education.

—LD

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Loading and Unloading Safety

I am writing this article under the direction of your steering committee. During our recent steering committee meeting (Sept. 17-20) I brought to them a concern that I have seen during my travels reviewing school district transportation programs. This concern is the use of a buzzer installed on the bus to signal students to cross the road. After discussion with the Steering Committee about this practice, the conclusion was that it was an unsafe practice and it should be addressed. In Idaho's School Bus Driver Training Classroom Curriculum under section five: Bus Driving Procedures. It talks about stopping to load passengers, "Signal students to enter bus from

the right, and cross from the left side of the road." In stopping to unload passengers it goes on to say, "As students exit bus, if they must cross road they should walk ten (10) feet in front of bus along the shoulder of road, and wait for **prearranged signal** from driver before crossing." In procedures, loading and unloading it talks about a **signal** and **prearranged signal**, but does not define what signal is to be used. If we look further into our Idaho's School Bus Driver Training Classroom Curriculum we find at the bottom of page 125 "Best Practices for School Bus Drivers, A. Strictly Enforce Safe Crossing Procedures. 1. **Eye contact** between driver and stu-

dent must be established before the student begins to cross. Teach children the concept "I See You, You See Me." 3. Use a consistent **Safe Crossing Signal** when it's safe for the child to cross, pointing in the direction you want the child to walk. All bus drivers in your operation should use the same **Safe Crossing hand signal**, and all children should be trained about what it means." If we continue on in "Best Practices for School Bus Drivers, we find J. Educate Children. 4. **Crossing children must be crystal-clear about what drivers signals mean.**" The buzzer installed on a bus is mechanical equipment that can fail to operate. In some cases be hard for students to

hear. There may be noise from the bus engine or other ambient noise that may be in the area of the bus stop. Students get on or off of the bus trying to listen rather than looking at the driver or looking both directions before crossing. In some cases I have observed students looking at the ground or strait ahead, not looking in both directions to see if it is safe to cross. They rely on the sound of a buzzer to let them know it is safe. Where will the buzzer be when they cross the road some day without the bus? Driver trainers should be training drivers the proper way to give hand signals for crossing students. Some have said that the motoring public confuses

(cont. pg. 8)

Transportation for New Charter Schools

Offering students transportation to and from school makes charter schools more accessible to families. When providing transportation for students, charter schools must comply with all laws and rules that govern transportation for students.

Transportation shall be provided for pupils who live more than 1½ miles from the nearest appropriate school within the charter schools attendance area. Statute does allow a school to transport students who reside less than 1½ miles from the school when such transportation is warranted by concern for the health and safety of the students. This process is approved through a safety busing application.

There are several means by which charter schools may provide transportation services. These include:

- Purchasing school buses and operating self-contained student transportation services
- Contracting with the local districts
- Contracting with outside contractors
- Paying parents when transportation is not

provided (in lieu of transportation) when it is economically feasible to do so.

If a charter school chooses to provide transportation services by any method other than those listed above, it may not be eligible for reimbursement of transportation costs.

Charter schools should begin busing planning during the petition process. Purchasing school buses and contracting bus services requires time to develop bid specifications and complete the bidding process. For charter schools in the initial year of operation, the petition shall include a proposal for transportation services with an estimated first-year cost. The State Department of Education will include in the annual appropriation to the charter school eighty percent (80%) of the estimated transportation cost. The final appropriation payment in July shall reflect eighty-five percent (85%) of the actual cost. Payments will continue to be advanced and paid in February of each continuing year.

0 district trainers and drivers on proper methods of evacuating a school bus in an emer-

gency. Training topics included proper types of equipment, storage, and use of emergency equipment, providing emergency evacuation training in accordance with NHTSA's Guideline 17, proper documentation of all evacuation drills, instruction of students transported on field trips, activities and charter buses, and Blind Mans Bluff an actual demonstration on how to safely evacuate a burning bus using either a smoke machine or by blindfolding the driver.

SDE staff and State Trainers will continue to offer School Bus Watch and Operation Life-saver training during the upcoming school year. If your district has any training needs you would like assistance with or specific topics you would like to see at a Train the Trainer workshop please contact your regional Transportation Specialist, State Trainer or Steering Committee Representative. Tentative date for the 2008 Train the Trainer workshop will be during the week of August 11 with the only location likely to be at BSU in Boise.

—Lanette Daw



Charter school should begin busing planning during the petition process.



Maximum Depreciation Allowed 2007-2008

The following table reports the maximum depreciation that will be allowed for school buses purchased during the 2007-2008 school year. These maximums will be in effect for the entire school year, or until SDE is able to receive a bid on the basic bus. If the basic bus process is successful prior to the end of this school year, the maximum depreciation will be adjusted to reflect the basic bus bid.

—Lanette Daw

| 12-Year Schedule: All Conventional – GAS | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Capacity: | 73 & Up | 59-72 | | 47-58 | 35-46 | 20-34 | 11-19 |
| Maximum Depreciation: | Average Price Unestablished | Average Price Unestablished | | Average Price Unestablished | Average Price Unestablished | \$51,486 | \$41,796 |
| 12-Year Schedule: All Conventional – DIESEL | | | | | | | |
| Capacity: | 73 & Up | 59-72 | | 47-58 | 35-46 | 20-34 | 11-19 |
| Maximum Depreciation: | \$79,835 | \$74,555 | | \$72,475 | \$72,094 | \$53,039 | Average Price Unestablished |
| 12-Year Schedule: Transit FE – DIESEL | | | | | | | |
| Capacity: | 85 & Up | 73-84 | 59-72 | 47-58 | 35-46 | 20-34 | 11-19 |
| Maximum Depreciation: | \$84,737 | \$88,930 | \$88,857 | Average Price Unestablished | Average Price Unestablished | Average Price Unestablished | Average Price Unestablished |
| 12-Year Schedule: Transit RE – DIESEL | | | | | | | |
| Capacity: | 73 & Up | 59-72 | | 47-58 | 35-46 | 20-34 | 11-19 |
| Maximum Depreciation: | \$102,115 | Average Price Unestablished | | Average Price Unestablished | Average Price Unestablished | Average Price Unestablished | Average Price Unestablished |

Loading and Unloading Safety (from pg. 6)

the hand signal with a signal to proceed. "Idaho Code 49-1422" clearly states that as long as the red lights near the top of the bus are flashing and/or the stop arm on the left side of the bus is extended **"remained stopped"**. If a motorist passes through an extended stop arm during a loading or unloading procedure that motorist has broken the law and should be turned in to local law enforcement. Drivers should be training students to follow their hand signal to cross and making eye contact with the driver and looking in both directions

before crossing. A long steady blast of the horn should be given if the bus driver sees danger, to warn the students to stop. Students that do not want to follow the driver's instruction for crossing should be reported to the building principle. School administrators should take a role to work with bus drivers to help educate students in proper crossing procedures. Students that don't want to comply with the rules of crossing procedures maybe should not be riding the buses. One school district that I know, took the names

of students that drivers had turned in for crossing procedure problems, and every Friday one of the building principles and a driver with a bus held a crossing procedure class the last hour of the day. If you were in the class three times you didn't ride the bus again if you came back the fourth time. In six months the majority of students that had to cross the road were following proper procedure. The class size was reduced from 12 students each class, to 1 or 2 students each class. On going education was the key to addressing the prob-

lem. In review the Steering Committee would strongly recommend that districts using the buzzers installed on their buses for crossing signals would reconsider their programs and change to a hand signal with eye contact. Let's get all of Idaho's bus riding students on the same **safe** page.

—LD

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